

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9356

INFO USIA WASHDC

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA: THE U.S. IMAGE

REF: VIENNA 3679, (A) VIENNA 3679, (B) VIENNA 4497, (C) VIENNA 4951

1. IN REFLECTING UPON AUSTRIA IN RECENT MESSAGES, THE EMBASSY HAS ONLY TOUCHED ON THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AREA SO FAR, NOT BECAUSE IT JUDGES IT TO BE UNIMPORTANT TO LONG-TERM U.S. INTERESTS HERE BUT BECAUSE IT PRESENTS NO CRITICAL PROBLEMS OVER THE SHORT RUN AND IS NOT FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT IN KIND FROM THE PICTURE IN OTHER PARTS OF WESTERN EUROPE. FURTHERMORE, GIVEN THE PREVAILING POLITICAL STABILITY OF THE COUNTRY AND THE TENDENCY OF AUSTRIANS TO LEAVE FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE EXPERTS, SLIGHT CHANGES AND FLUCTUATIONS OF PUBLIC OPINION CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO HAVE A DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON U.S. INTERESTS HERE. AT THE SAME TIME, AUSTRIA'S POLICY OF WEST-LEANING NEUTRALITY AND--EVEN MORE--ITS ABILITY TO PLAY ITS ROLE AS A SHOWCASE OF PROSPERITY IN FREEDOM FOR THE ADJACENT COMMUNIST WORLD--DOES FINALLY DEPEND ON AUSTRIANS' PERCEPTION OF THE WORLD, THE WEST (READ THE U.S.) AND THEIR OWN COUNTRY.

2. THE AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL HAS BEEN GIVING US A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO MEASURE THE BREADTH AND CONSIDERABLE DEPTH

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OF GOOD FEELING WHICH WE STILL ENJOY IN AUSTRIA. ALL THE MEDIA

DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE SPACE OR AIRTIME TO COMMEMORATING AMERICA'S BIRTHDAY, EMPHASIZING THE HISTORIC ROLE OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, AND PRAISING U.S. ACHIEVEMENTS IN VARIOUS FIELDS. MANY ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, ARRANGED SPECIAL OBSERVANCES. AT ONE OF THESE, ON JULY 5, IN SALZBURG, CHANCELLOR KREISKY GAVE A MAJOR ADDRESS IN WHICH HE STRESSED AUSTRIA'S DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO THE U.S. FOR POST-WAR RELIEF, MARSHALL PLAN AND THE STATE TREATY AND THE DEPENDENCE OF AUSTRIA ON AMERICAN STRENGTH FOR ITS CONTINUED SECURITY. THE CHANCELLOR EXPRESSED SENTIMENTS WHICH ARE IN THE HEARTS OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF HIS CONSTITUENTS, CERTAINLY THOSE OVER THE AGE OF THIRTY-FIVE. HIS MOVES IN CONNECTION WITH THE BICENTENNIAL INDICATE, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAS DOUBTS ABOUT THE ATTITUDES OF YOUNGER PEOPLE. HE LAUNCHED A CAMPAIGN TO COLLECT FUNDS FOR AUSTRIA'S BICENTENNIAL GIFT TO THE U.S. (A CHAIR OF AUSTRIAN STUDIES AT AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY), EXPLAINING THIS METHOD IN PREFERENCE TO A SIMPLE GOVERNMENT GRANT BY THE NEED FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT THAT MIGHT LEAD TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING ON THE PART OF THOSE AUSTRIANS "WHO WERE NOT AROUND AT THE TIME" OF WHAT THE U.S. DID FOR AUSTRIA. HE IS HAVING A PAMPHLET ON THE SUBJECT PREPARED FOR DISTRIBUTION IN VAST QUANTITIES, PERHAPS ALSO THROUGH THE SCHOOL SYSTEM. AT THE SAME TIME, TV ADVERTISING FOR THE CAMPAIGN IS GENTLY CURBED FOR A FEW DAYS BEFORE EACH MEETING OF THE SOCIALIST YOUTH ORGANIZATION, WHICH HAS GONE ON RECORD AGAINST THE PRO-U.S. CAMPAIGN AND IS IN A STATE OF CONFLICT WITH THE MAINSTREAM OF THE PARTY ORGANIZATION. WHY PROVOKE THEM;

3. KREISKY KNOWS HIS AUSTRAINS BETTER THAN THE EMBASSY EVER CAN HOPE TO. WE ARE, HOWEVER, ALSO AWARE OF THE LIMITS OF THE GOOD WILL WITH WHICH AMERICA IS SEEN HERE. THESE ARE CLEAREST WHERE THE YOUNG ARE CONCERNED--THE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITIES (A SMALL MINORITY AMONG THEM), WHO OFTEN DISRUPT LECTURES WHEN "REACTIONARY" VIEWS ARE EXPRESSED, FLOCK TO MEETINGS ON CUBA OR CHILE, AND DILIGENTLY DISTRIBUTE LEFTIST LITERATURE AT THE ENTRANCE OF UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS; AND THE "YOUNG SOCIALISTS", WHO HAVE RECENTLY DEFIED THEIR PARTY ORGANIZATION TO CO-OPERATE IN COMMUNIST-SPONSORED DEMONSTRATIONS AND TO PUBLISH SOMETIMES SCURRILOUSLY ANTI-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AMERICAN FEATURES IN THEIR PERIODICAL. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS MINORITY ONLY REPRESENTS A POTENTIAL DANGER BECAUSE IT FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE MASS OF A YOUTH POPULATION THAT SEEMS EVEN MORE APATHETIC AND INDIFFERENT TO POLITICS THAN IS THE CASE IN OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES. THE LIMITS OF GOOD WILL TOWARD AMERICA ARE MORE SUBTLE IN OTHER AREAS. ONE OF THE OFFICIAL SOCIALIST DAILIES, FOR INSTANCE, RECENTLY REPRINTED PROMINENTLY THE MOST SCURRILOUS OF THE YOUTH WING'S BICENTENNIAL

FEATURES. AND, AS THOUGH PRAISING THE UNITED STATES WERE, SOMEHOW, LESS THAN DECENT OR REASONABLE, MOST BICENTENNIAL ARTICLES IN EVEN THE MOST CONSERVATIVE MEDIA CONTAINED AN APOLOGY, EITHER SO EXPRESSED OR IN THE FORM OF A LISTING OF THE INTERNATIONAL FAILURES AND DOMESTIC PROBLEMS OF THE U.S. ONE OF OUR BEST FRIENDS AMONG JOURNALISTS, WHEN TWITTED ABOUT A RADIO COMMENTARY CELEBRATING THE BICENTENNIAL BUT DEVOTING CONSIDERABLE TIME IN ITS INTRODUCTION TO IMPERFECTIONS, ALLOWED THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TODAY IN AUSTRIA TO SPEAK OF THE U.S.

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IN POSITIVE TERMS WITHOUT PAYING THE "REDIBILITY FEE" BY A LIST OF RESERVATIONS. THUS, ALL THAT IS IMPERFECT IN AMERICAN SOCIETY AND POLICY IS WELL PUBLICIZED. IT IS PROJECTED AGAINST A BACKGROUND POOR IN INFORMATION ABOUT MUCH OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD--THE PRODUCT OF AN ANTIQUATED EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, A LARGELY SUPERFICIAL AND PROVINCIALY SENSATIONAL PRESS, AND SOMEWHAT SLEEPY ELECTRONIC MEDIA. OLD STEREOTYPES ABOUT AMERICAN MATERIALISM, RACISM, LACK OF CULTURE AND CREATIVITY STILL SURVIVE HERE FAR MORE THAN IN WESTERN EUROPE. ALL THIS, AS HAS BEEN SAID, IS ALSO PROJECTED AGAINST GOOD FEELINGS TOWARD US AS WE ARE SEEN TO HAVE BEEN DURING AND AFTER THE WAR, AND AGAINST THE PICTURE OF THE U.S. BROUGHT BACK BY THE IMPORTANT MINORITY WHICH STUDIED OVER THERE. THE BALANCE IS NOT IMPROVING.

4. THE SITUATION IS NOT MADE BETTER BY THE AWARENESS OF AT LEAST THOUGHTFUL AUSTRIANS THAT THEIR POLICY OF NEUTRALITY, EVEN THEIR MOST FUNDAMENTAL SECURITY, DEPENDS ON THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN EUROPE. FEW AUSTRIANS CAN CONCEIVE OF ANY EVEN SHORT-LIVED SUCCESSFUL RESISTANCE BY THEIR FORCES TO AN ATTACK FROM THE EAST. IN THEIR HELPLESSNESS THEY ARE DOUBLY CRITICAL OF ANY SIGNS OF AMERICAN WEAKNESS AND DOUBLY NERVOUS IN THE FACE OF ANY SIGNS THAT WE MIGHT GIVE UP THE POLICY OF DETENTE. WE CANNOT HOPE TO GIVE THEM TRUE SATISFACTION
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IN THE AREA OF FOREIGN POLICY.

5. WHERE THE U.S. IMAGE IN AUSTRIA IS CONCERNED, WE ARE LIVING ON ACCUMULATED CAPITAL. NOT ONLY IS THE MASSIVE AID, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL, WHICH WE ONCE GAVE AUSTRIA, RECEDING IN THE PAST; THE SAME IS TRUE OF THE HUGE U.S. INFORMATION AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS OF THE POST-WAR YEARS, WHICH REPRESENTED THE INTELLECTUAL LIFELINE FOR AUSTRIANS ISOLATED FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD OVER MOST OF A DECADE AND REACHED LITERALLY MILLIONS WITH NEWS, BOOKS, AND CREATIVE IMPULSES FROM AMERICA. MANY OF THE HUNDREDS WHO SPENT TIME IN THE U.S. UNDER MARSHALL PLAN PROGRAMS TO UPDATE THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE ARE NOW RETIRED OR DEAD, THE FIRST OF THE LARGE FULBRIGHT CONTINGENTS OF THE IMMEDIATE POST-WAR YEARS ARE NOW AT THE PEAK OF THEIR CAREERS, TO BE REPLACED BEFORE VERY LONG BY A GENERATION IN WHICH THE "FULBRIGHTERS" ARE LESS DENSELY SOWN. THIS IS WHY--THOUGH THERE IS NO CAUSE FOR IMMEDIATE ALARM, NOR ARE THERE RESOURCES TO PERMIT A SPECTACULAR INCREASE IN OUR EFFORTS IN THE CULTURAL AND INFORMATION FIELD--WE MUST NEVERTHELESS GUARD AGAINST COMPLACENCY. THE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS ARE AS IMPORTANT AS THEY EVER WERE. USIS EFFORTS--ESPECIALLY AT THE UNIVERSITIES AND IN THE MEDIA--REMAIN VITAL, MUST NOT BE FURTHER DIMINISHED, AND SHOULD BE MADE MORE EFFECTIVE IN PROVIDING A FLOW OF INFORMATION IN DEPTH, KEEPING A DIALOGUE ALIVE, AND MAKING THE U.S. PRESENCE FELT.MEEHAN

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